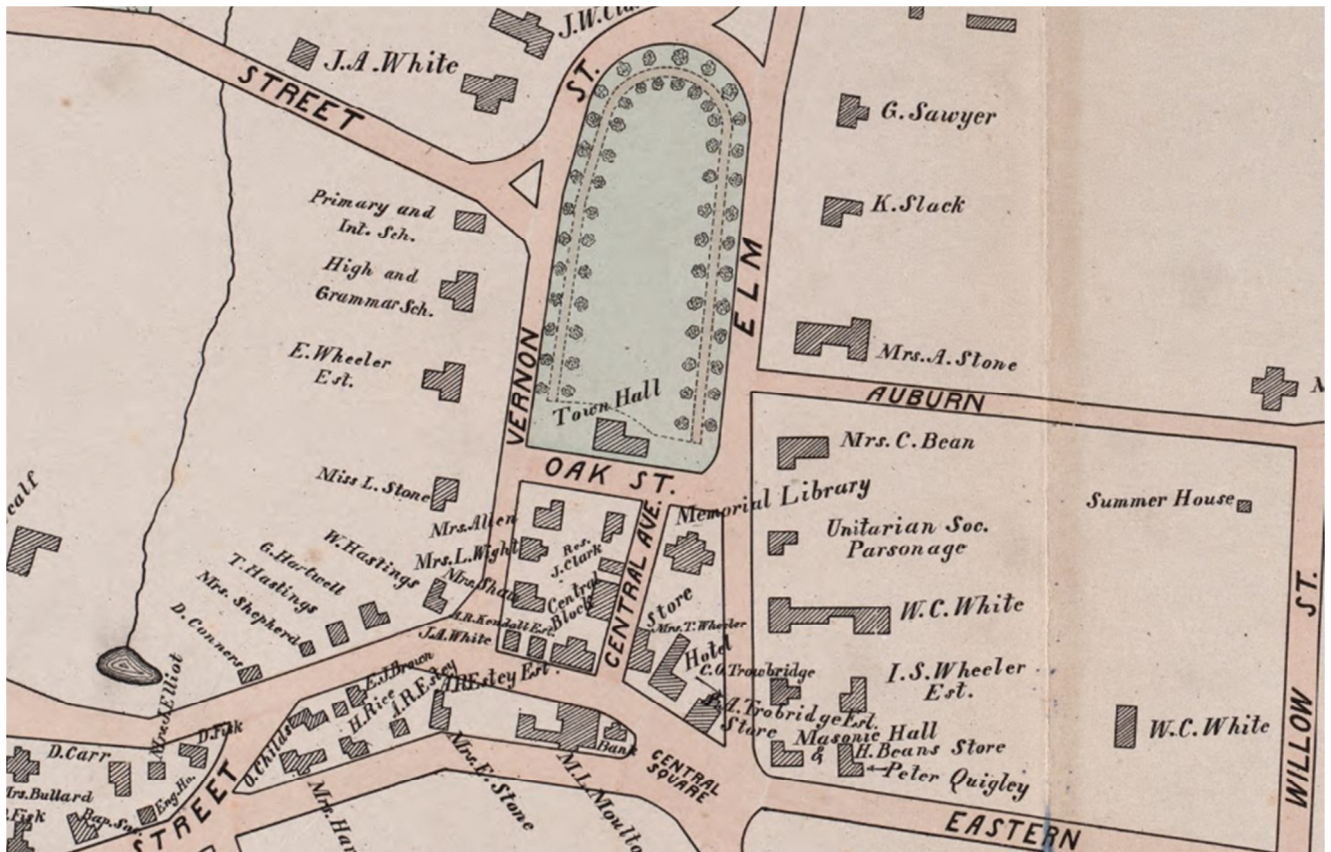


Preliminary Study Report  
Proposed Enlargement of the  
Framingham Centre Common Historic District  
Framingham, Massachusetts



Framingham Historic District Commission  
Community Opportunities Group, Inc., Consultant  
June 2014

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*Cover image: Framingham Center, 1895 (Image courtesy of the Library of Congress)*

## Summary

In the fall of 2013, the Framingham Historic District Commission (FHDC) identified a block of properties located south of the Framingham Centre Common as potentially eligible for inclusion within the existing local historic district. The FHDC voted to designate eight properties within the block bounded by Oak Street, Library Street, Worcester Road, and Vernon Street as a study area and designated the Commission as a study committee as prescribed under M.G.L. Ch. 40C Section 3. The Town had considered several of these properties during previous designation efforts, but removed the properties prior to Town Meeting approval of the district. In January of 2014, the Town hired Community Opportunities Group, Inc. (COG), to research the eligibility of the study area and complete the study report with support from Framingham Community and Economic Development Department Senior Planner, Erika Oliver Jerram, and Framingham Historic District Commission members:

- |                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| ▪ Gerald Couto, Chair       | ▪ Sandi Marder  |
| ▪ Sue Bernstein, Vice-Chair | ▪ Calvin Smith  |
| ▪ Julie Ferrari             | ▪ Helen Lemoine |
| ▪ Ron Lamphere              | ▪ Amy Finstein  |
| ▪ Jim Kubat                 | ▪ Ted Grenham   |
| ▪ Henry Field               |                 |

## Public Hearings and Town Meeting

The Framingham Historic District Commission will hold a public hearing on the proposed Framingham Centre Historic District expansion on or about September 2014. The proposed expansion will be considered at the Fall 2014 Town Meeting, which begins in October 2014.

## **Introduction**

Framingham is a community rich in history. Its built environment includes a diverse collection of historic buildings, objects, structures, landscapes, and burial grounds that provide a visual connection with this past. These resources, which are located throughout the community, represent three centuries of development from the town's earliest beginnings as an 18th century agricultural community to its more recent history as a 20th century suburban and industrial center.

The Town of Framingham values its heritage and has adopted many of the preservation tools available to protect its cultural assets. In addition to documenting historic resources on inventory forms, the Town has restored many of its historic civic buildings, which continue to serve as beloved community landmarks. In addition, the Town has established both an Historical Commission (1969) and Historic District Commission (1978), nominated 129 properties to the National Register of Historic Places, and adopted a Demolition Delay Bylaw (1991). The Town has also designated three local historic districts under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, protecting a total of 72 properties. The FHDC is now proposing to expand one of these districts, the Framingham Centre Common Historic District, to include an additional eight properties. The proposed expansion would reinforce the Town's position that preserving and protecting its history is a worthwhile and necessary endeavor. It would also address one of the goals expressed in the Town's 2002 Historic Preservation Plan, "To pursue inclusion of key properties into existing districts."

### **Background to the Current Proposal**

The Town of Framingham approved its first local historic district in 1978 when it designated 28 commercial, institutional, and private residential buildings surrounding the Framingham Centre Common as a local historic district. The Framingham Centre Common Historic District represents Framingham's finest collection of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture set within a nearly intact historical setting around the town's original common. The district includes a diverse range of building types and styles and is a significant example of early New England town planning around a central common area. In addition to the Common and its furnishings, the district includes private homes, churches, and several of Framingham's most iconic civic landmarks, the Village Hall (1834), Framingham Academy (1837), and the Edgell Memorial Library (1872).

In 1994, Town Meeting approved the designation of a second local historic district, the Jonathan Maynard Historic District, to protect 32 historic buildings along Pleasant Street, just outside the historic Centre Common. Two years later, Town Meeting approved the expansion of both the Framingham Centre Common Historic District (two additional properties) and the Jonathan Maynard Historic District (six additional properties). In 2008, Town Meeting approved the Town's third local historic district, the Sarah Claves Historic District to protect one property with regional historic significance.

Framingham Centre has been the subject of intense development and redevelopment pressure for more than 40 years. In the late 1960s, the former Worcester Turnpike was reconfigured and expanded into the present Route 9 highway system, which initiated intense urban renewal activities in the Centre. To accommodate the Route 9 expansion, the State removed almost the entire commercial core of the historic

Centre, including roads, buildings, and the square itself. As a result, commercial development relocated closer to the Common causing the demolition of many historic buildings around the town green, including Wallace Nutting's house, "Nuttingholm." This loss of some of the town's most important historic buildings led local residents to request Town Meeting approval of the Centre Common as Framingham's first local historic district. In 1978, Town Meeting approved the designation of the Framingham Centre Common Historic District to protect 28 properties, including the Common. While the Town considered including additional historic properties in the district, including several properties located south of the Common, the Town removed these properties prior to Town Meeting vote.

In 1995, the Framingham Historical Commission recognized that Framingham Centre's significance extended beyond the core properties protected within the local historic district and nominated a larger district of 80 properties to the National Register of Historic Places. This district extended beyond the boundaries of the existing local historic district to include properties on streets peripheral to the Common, including the block of properties located to the south.

Despite the Centre's historic designations, redevelopment pressure, especially for the commercial properties along Route 9, continues to threaten historic resources in the area, particularly those not included in the existing local historic district. Intense traffic around the Common and along Edgell Road, which has become an important north/south byway, continues to impact the historic character of the Centre. Without regulatory guidance through local historic designation, the special architectural details that define the Centre's unprotected historic buildings could be lost.

### **Local Historic Districts and the Historic Districts Act**

The first local historic districts in the United States were designated in Charleston, South Carolina (1931) and New Orleans, Louisiana (1937). In Massachusetts, two local historic districts (Beacon Hill, Boston in 1955 and Nantucket in 1956) were established under special acts of the legislature. In 1960, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts adopted the Historic Districts Act (Chapter 40C of the General Laws) to allow communities to protect areas that were of special significance to their heritage. Under this act, nearly all of the Commonwealth's cities and towns have established local historic districts and many, like Framingham, have more than one district.

Local Historic Districts have three main purposes:

- To preserve and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant to the history of the Commonwealth's cities and towns;
- To maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places;
- To encourage compatibility with existing buildings when new buildings are planned in the districts.

The Framingham Historic District Commission (FHDC) oversees the Town's local historic districts and works with property owners to preserve the architectural integrity of their historic buildings. Governed by M.G.L. Ch. 40C and Article VII, Section 5 of the Town of Framingham General Bylaws, the FHDC reviews the architectural appropriateness of most proposed exterior design changes to designated properties, except for changes not subject to public view, in-kind repairs, and changes specifically exempted from review:

- Temporary structures erected for a period of ninety days or less;
- Two dimensional signs of four (4) square feet or less;
- Terraces, walks, driveways, and sidewalks at grade level;
- Storm doors and windows, screens, gutters, antennae, and window air conditioners; and
- Paint color and color of roof materials.

Historic District Commissions do not prevent changes from occurring within a local historic district, nor do they seek to prevent new construction. Their purpose is to allow for the thoughtful consideration of change and to ensure that changes and additions are harmonious with the architectural integrity of the historic buildings. HDCs also seek to prevent the introduction of incongruous elements that might distract from the district's overall aesthetic and historic character. When properly established and administered, a local historic district is not unduly burdensome to property owners and, indeed, can enhance property values by mutually assuring similar care will be taken in the review of alterations to all properties in the district.

#### **Local Historic Districts vs. National Register Districts**

While there is often confusion regarding local historic district designation versus National Register listing, the difference between these two historic preservation tools is significant. While listing in the National Register of Historic Places indicates historical importance, it is primarily an honorary recognition that provides little protection from incongruous changes or demolition of significant structures. In contrast, local historic district designation is a locally approved regulatory tool that allows for oversight of proposed alterations to historic buildings and landscapes to guide changes in a manner that respects both the architectural fabric of the subject property and the overall historic character of the district. Local historic district designation offers the strongest form of protection for a community's historic buildings and landscapes.

## **Methodology Statement**

In response to continued development pressure on Framingham Centre's historic buildings, the Framingham Historic District Commission identified the need to expand the boundaries of the Framingham Centre Common Historic District's to protect additional properties worthy of designation. With the support of interested property owners and the Framingham Historical Commission, whose jurisdiction includes oversight of the properties through the Framingham Centre National Register Historic District, the FHDC seeks to expand the Framingham Centre Common Historic District to include eight properties located within the block bounded by Oak Street, Library Street, Vernon Street, and Worcester Road. This designation would bring to fruition efforts that began more than 35 years ago to protect this important collection of historic buildings and streetscapes.

After establishing itself as the Local Historic District Study Committee in 2013, the Framingham Historic District Commission hired Community Opportunities Group, Inc. (COG) to research the significance of the subject properties and complete the study report for the local historic district expansion. Basic research for this report derives from earlier historic resource inventory forms prepared by the Framingham Planning Department, supplemented by primary source research conducted by COG, including a review of town atlases, directories, property deed records, and building permits. The Framingham Centre Historic District nomination to the National Register of Historic Places was also consulted.

Additional major sources of primary materials were provided by the Framingham Public Library and Framingham Historical Society. These resources included copies of Framingham atlases and maps, town directories, the contents of vertical files, and numerous published Framingham histories. Several websites also provided historic images of Framingham Centre, including the Framingham History Center and Framingham.com (postcards and photographs) and the Library of Congress, Ward Maps, Historic Map Works, and Maps of Antiquities (maps and atlases.)



## **Significance Statement**

Expanding the Framingham Centre Common Historic District to include the properties located within the block bounded by Oak Street, Library Street, Worcester Road, and Vernon Street would continue efforts to protect Framingham Centre that began more than 35 years ago. The eight properties located within the proposed expansion area represent a collection of historically and architecturally significant properties and their historic streetscapes. Their inclusion in the district reflects the Centre's continued residential development after the arrival of train service to the area in 1850 and the ongoing development of the Centre's commercial district from its inception in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Designation of these historic resources would protect an important gateway to the Common and preserve an additional chapter in Framingham Center's history.

The village of Framingham Centre, located at the geographic center of the town, developed after residents agreed to construct a new meeting house and purchase four acres of land for a common grazing area in 1735. Over the next century, the village slowly developed around a central common and meeting house with large Georgian style homes, several churches, and the Framingham Academy (1792 (demolished) and 1837). In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a small commercial district, Central Square, developed south of the Common along the newly formed Worcester Turnpike (1806), a major transportation route from Boston to Worcester. Located at the halfway point along the turnpike, the Square became a popular resting stop with numerous businesses and hotels built to accommodate travelers. The commercial district's success led prosperous shopkeepers and businessmen to build new residences around the Common, including high style examples of Greek Revival homes.

Central Square continued to thrive until 1835, when the railroad arrived in South Framingham and commercial business migrated to this area. By the mid-1840s, the Turnpike had folded and even the extension of the Boston & Worcester Railroad line near the Centre in 1850 couldn't resurrect Central Square's former commercial success. It did signal a renewed interest in the residential area around the Common, however, as Framingham Centre began to redefine itself as a civic and cultural center, culminating in the Town's decision to construct its first dedicated public library building on the Common in 1872. In the two decades preceding the erection of the Edgell Memorial Library, the previously undeveloped area between the Common and Central Square was subdivided and developed with new homes designed in the Italianate and Gothic Revival styles. Unlike earlier homes built around the Common, these homes on Oak, Library (formerly Central Avenue), and Vernon Street were sited on smaller lots and were generally more modest in character. During this period, several of the Centre's earlier homes and commercial buildings were remodeled in the fashionable architectural styles of the period, including the Italianate style.

In the 1960s, Framingham Centre was once again impacted by transportation changes, this time in the form of improvements to Route 9 (the former Worcester Turnpike). In 1966, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts demolished 80 percent of the historic commercial area in Central Square, razing 94 buildings, several roads, and the square itself, to allow for the widening and depression of Route 9. Today, only a small fraction of the Centre's once thriving commercial district remains. These buildings now serve as a visual buffer between the Centre Common and Route 9, which is now a major thoroughfare.



The eight residential and commercial properties proposed for inclusion in the local historic district display architectural features from the Italianate, Gothic Revival, Classical Revival, and Modern styles. Each building represents the popular architectural styles of their respective periods as well as the prevalence for building remodeling that occurred in the Centre during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The five houses in the study area are frame structures with four sheathed in wood clapboard and one now clad in vinyl siding. While these houses present a more modest character than earlier homes constructed around the Centre Common, the Italianate style Caroline B. Clark House at 9 Vernon Street and the Gothic Revival style John and Sarah Clark House at 12 Library Street exhibit the most high style variants of their respective styles and are reflective of their more prominent location on the Common. The side gable, side hall plan Italianate houses at 8 Library Street and 3 and 5-7 Vernon Street were near-identical buildings constructed by Lothrop Wight on newly created parcels subdivided from his property at 931 Worcester Road. The Harriet Carter House at 3 Vernon Street is the best preserved example of this collection. Over the past century, modifications have been made to the Lothrop Wight House at 8 Library Street and the Julia Wight House at 5-7 Vernon Street for two-family use, which has slightly altered the architectural symmetry of these buildings. Today, all five houses, constructed immediately after the arrival of the railroad to the Centre in 1850, present a building form and character that was typical in Framingham as it transitioned from an agricultural community to a suburban town during the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The three commercial buildings proposed for inclusion in the district represent examples of the town's earliest commercial structures as well as a later commercial building type designed to cater to a newly mobile population during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Federal style Tilton-Wheeler Store at 945 Worcester Road and the Italianate/Colonial Revival style Wight-Esty Block at 931 Worcester are both early 19<sup>th</sup> century wood frame structures now clad in vinyl siding with exposed wood trim. The Modern style Van Duzer Hardware Store Building at 939 Worcester Road is a single-story brick commercial block constructed during the early years of the automobile era.

None of the eight properties include ancillary structures.

*Further discussion on the historic and architectural significance of each of the proposed properties is provided in the Property Description Section of this report.*

## **Justification of Boundaries**

The eight properties proposed for inclusion in the expanded Framingham Centre Common Historic District are located in a single block bounded by Oak Street to the north, Library Street to the east, Worcester Road to the south, and Vernon Street to the west. These properties represent three of the last remaining commercial properties from Framingham Centre's once thriving commercial district and a collection of Italianate and Gothic Revival style houses constructed after the arrival of train service to Framingham Centre in 1850. All eight properties are included in the Framingham Common National Register Historic District and two properties, 12 Library Street and 9 Vernon Street, were originally proposed for inclusion in the Framingham Centre Common Historic District when the local historic district was first designated in 1978.

## **Historic Maps of Framingham Centre**

*Atlas of the Town of Framingham, Massachusetts - Framingham Center, 1895 (Barnes & Jenks)*

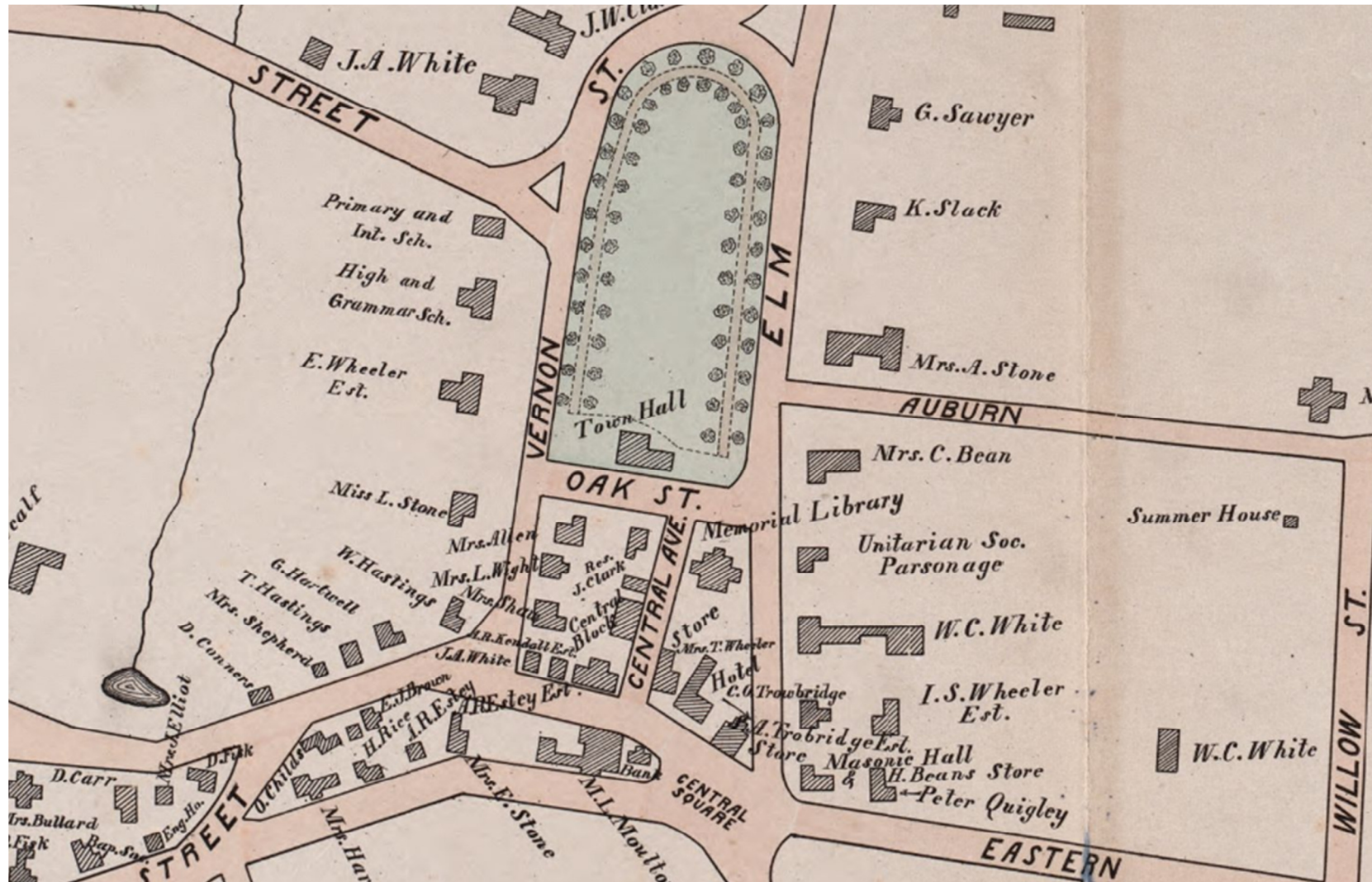


Image courtesy of Library of Congress

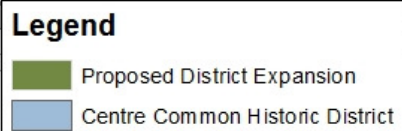


Map of Framingham Centre, 1908 (Geo. H. Walker & Co.)



Image courtesy of [mapsofantiquity.com](http://mapsofantiquity.com)

## **Map of Proposed Enlargement**





## Property Index

#	Street Address	Inventory Form #	Construction Date	Historic Name	Architectural Style
1	8 Library Street	1101	ca. 1860	Lothrop White House (Developer)	Italianate
2	12 Library Street	36	1859-1860	John and Sarah Clark House	Gothic Revival
3	3 Vernon Street	1103	ca. 1860	Harriet Carter House	Italianate
4	5-7 Vernon Street	1104	ca. 1860	Julia Wight House	Italianate
5	9 Vernon Street	35	1852-1853	Caroline B. Clark House	Italianate
6	931 Worcester Road	38	ca. 1830	Wight-Esty Block	Italianate/ Classical Revival
7	939 Worcester Road	1102	ca. 1935	Van Duzer Hardware Store	Modern
8	945 Worcester Road/ 1 Vernon Street	39	ca. 1830	Tilton-Wheeler Store	Federal/Greek Revival

## **Property Descriptions**

**8 Library Street  
Lothrop White House (Developer), built ca. 1853**



The Lothrop Wight House is a two and one-half story former single-family house that was converted to a two-family dwelling during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Historic photographs of this house depict a façade similar in detail to the buildings at 3 and 5-7 Vernon Street – rectangular Italianate style houses oriented gable end to the street with a side hall plan, three bay façade, regularly spaced fenestration, paired cornice brackets, molded cornerboards, and a single entrance. This house also had an Italianate flat-roofed entry porch. During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the house was converted to a two-family and the first story center window was replaced with a second entry door. A two-bay wide porch supported by three chamfered wood posts has replaced the original entry porch and architectural details were removed when vinyl siding and one-over-one replacement windows were installed.

This house was constructed by Lothrop Wight, who owned the commercial building at 931 Worcester Road and much of the block between Worcester Road and Oak Street south of the Centre Common. Wight, a local real estate developer, subdivided his property sometime shortly after 1850 and constructed three near identical Italianate style houses on Library and Vernon Streets. In 1855, Wight sold this property to Constantine C. Esty, who promptly transferred ownership to Sarah and John Clark. The Clarks also purchased the adjoining parcel of land at the corner of Library and Oak Street (12 Library Street). The Clark Family, who retained ownership of this property until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, may have rented the property since their primary residence remained at 12 Library Street. According to Framingham Directories, 8 Library Street remained in use as a single family home until ca. 1950, when it was listed as a two-family dwelling.

This building is significant as one of three Italianate style houses constructed by Lothrop Wight after the arrival of train service to Framingham Centre in 1850. Despite this building's modifications, the house still retains its original massing and upper story fenestration pattern. The property is included in the Framingham Centre National Register Historic District.

**12 Library Street**  
**John and Sarah Clark House, built 1859-1860**



The John and Sarah Clark House is a well-preserved example of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Gothic Revival cottage, a very unusual house type in Framingham. The one and one-half story wood-frame house is rectangular in plan with a single-story rear ell and a three bay facade. The house displays traditional Gothic Revival elements in its steeply pitched gable roof, jig sawn bargeboard, pointed dormer windows, and lancet arched panels in the front doorway. The house also exhibits transitional elements from the Greek Revival and Italianate styles. Moldings used for eaves and window cornices were borrowed from the earlier Greek Revival style, while the house's window frames with boxed heads and the open, arched first story of the projecting front porch were influenced by the Italianate style. Each arch in the porch displays an unusual keystone/console carrying a single carved oak leaf. The house was renovated in the 1980s with new replacement windows that have slightly altered the scale of window trim. However, other exterior ornamentation was restored and the house remains a well-preserved example of its type.

The Clark House was the last property developed on the block between the Common and Central Square after train service arrived in Framingham Centre in 1850. Located on the corner of Library Street (formerly Central Avenue) and Oak Street, this house was built in 1859-1860 by John Clark, who served as Deputy Sheriff from 1852-53 and Framingham Postmaster from 1853 until 1861, and his wife Sarah. The house remained in the Clark Family for more than a century. This property was initially included in the 1977 proposal to designate the Framingham Centre Common Historic District but was removed prior to Town Meeting vote. It is included in the Framingham Centre National Register Historic District.

*MHC Inventory Form #FRA.3. This description substantially corrects and/or modifies the information contained in Form B.*

**3 Vernon Street  
Harriet Carter House, built ca. 1853**



The Harriet Carter House is the best preserved example of the three near-identical Italianate style houses constructed by Lothrop Wight after the arrival of train service to Framingham Centre in 1850. The two and one-half story rectangular house is oriented gable end to the street with a side hall plan and a single story rear ell. The building's three bay façade features regularly spaced fenestration and a Greek Revival-influenced entrance with full-length sidelights. An entry porch with slender columns supporting a pedimented gable may be a later addition. Italianate influences are displayed in the paired cornice brackets and narrow molded cornerboards, similar to details found on other houses located in the block of residences south of the Common. Despite the installation of one-over-one window sashes, the house retains much of its original architectural detailing.

Lothrop Wight, a local real estate developer who owned the commercial building at 931 Worcester Road and much of the block between Worcester Road and Oak Street south of the Centre Common, subdivided his property sometime shortly after 1850 and constructed three houses on Library and Vernon Streets. In 1853, Wight and his wife Julia sold this property to Harriet Carter. In 1868, Louisa A. Shaw, a widow, purchased the property. Historic maps indicate that Shaw continued to live in the house until 1908, when the property is shown as the estate of L. Shaw. In 1916, James Charles purchased the house and his family continued to own the property until 1956.

This property is included in the Framingham Centre National Register Historic District.



**5-7 Vernon Street  
Julia Wight House, built ca. 1853**



The Wight House at 5 Vernon Street was one of three similar Italianate style residences constructed by Lothrop Wight in the block between the Centre Common and the adjoining commercial district along the Worcester Turnpike. This two-and-one-half story wood frame building was originally designed as a side hall plan, end-gable Italianate home with a rear two-story ell. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the house was extensively remodeled for use as a two-family. The house still retains its original paired brackets along a deep cornice and narrow molded cornerboards. During the renovations, the home's original entrance on Vernon Street was removed and simple entrances and porches were added to both side elevations. The first and second story fenestration pattern on the Vernon Street elevation was also altered and now features paired windows in the central bay flanked by single windows, lending a horizontal impression. On the first story, the paired central windows are contained within a shallow projecting bay. The building's original rectangular footprint has also been altered by several single- and two-story rear and side ells. Despite this building's change in use to a two-family and the resulting modifications, the building still retains much of its original Italianate details and later architectural changes represent the building's historical evolution over the past 75 years.

Based on visual evidence, early maps, and deed research, it appears that 5 Vernon Street was originally constructed as a single-family house, one of three constructed by Lothrop Wight after he subdivided his property into house lots. After selling the other two properties, Wight's wife Julia retained ownership of this property until 1908, when historic maps identify the house as owned by the estate of "Wight." This house was converted to a two-family residence by 1933 when the home was listed as two addresses, #5 and #7, in the Framingham Directories (the first year the Framingham Directories included a resident listing by street address).

This property is included in the Framingham Centre National Register Historic District.

**9 Vernon Street**  
**Caroline B. Clark House, built ca. 1853**



The Caroline B. Clark House is a well-preserved and highly detailed Italianate style dwelling located on the corner of Vernon and Oak Streets directly south of the Center Common. Unlike its more modest side-hall plan Italianate style neighbors on Vernon and Library Streets, this home features an original L-shaped plan with a rear ell stretching back on Oak Street. It also features more elaborate Italianate style ornamentation in its heavily bracketed cornice and round headed gable windows. While the building's six-over-six double-hung wood windows feature simply detailed surrounds, the use of three-quarter round moldings instead of corner boards on the edges of major walls are a feature typical of more stylish houses of the period. The property's corner location results in two detailed facades. The dwelling's primary façade on Vernon Street (east) features a heavily bracketed one-story entry porch in the corner of the L. The front door is a handsome two-panel design, with each panel carrying a carved anthemion at its upper and lower end. The Oak Street façade (north) features a more restrained entry porch supported by slender chamfered posts located in the corner of the rear ell.

The Clark House was one of the last residences constructed on the south side of the Centre Common and is more in keeping with the scale and character of earlier homes built in the area. This home features architectural embellishment more elaborate than that of adjoining homes, which were sited on smaller lots and were more modest in character. The 1871 Atlas Map of Framingham Centre shows a Mrs. C. B. Clark living at this house, which corresponds with an 1853 Assessor's book listing of a Caroline B. Clark with a new house. This house served as the Plymouth Church Parsonage between 1916 and 1933, and possibly longer. This property was initially included in the 1977 proposal to designate the Framingham Centre Common Historic District but was removed prior to Town Meeting vote. It is included in the Framingham Centre National Register Historic District.

*MHC Inventory Form #FRA.35. This description substantially corrects and/or modifies the information contained in Form B.*



**931 Worcester Road  
Wight-Esty Block, built ca. 1830**



The Wight-Esty Block is a large two-story wood frame commercial building originally constructed in ca. 1830. Nine bays wide and four bays deep, the rectangular building rises from a granite foundation and is capped by a hipped roof pierced with two brick chimneys. Over its history, the building has been remodeled several times and exhibits elements from each of these changes. The building retains a heavy bracketed cornice dating from an Italianate remodeling in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as pilasters and leaded fanlight windows from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century Classical Revival remodeling of the building's first floor storefronts. Today, the building's façade (south) features multiple storefronts on the first story and symmetrically-spaced double-hung one-over-one windows on the second story. The storefront on the southeast corner of the building, which wraps around the corner of the structure, retains its entrance with sidelights, leaded fanlight windows, and a fluted Doric column on the Library Street elevation. The building's other storefronts have been altered. The building's Library Street elevation (east) retains two leaded fanlights with original wood surrounds featuring keystone blocks. Despite recent renovations, including storefront alterations, window replacement, and vinyl siding that have obscured some of this building's historic details, the Wight-Esty Block still retains much of its historic design integrity.

The Wight-Esty Block is shown on the 1830 map of Framingham Centre as one of two buildings located on the block between the Worcester Turnpike and the Centre Common. The building is listed as Wights Block on the 1850 Map of Framingham Center, for owner Lothrop Wight, a local real estate developer who owned most of the adjoining block of land to the north. Wight owned the commercial and office building until 1871, when it was listed under the name of his son-in-law architect Alexander R. Esty, who remodeled the building sometime during the 1870s or 1880s. Esty, who had grown up in Framingham and attended the Framingham Academy in Framingham Center, served as an apprentice to architect Gridley F. Bryant before opening his own firm in Boston. He was responsible for the design of numerous churches, schools, and libraries in the Boston area but is perhaps best known for his design of the Library of Congress in Washington D. C. He also designed many homes in Framingham including several

Italianate style homes surrounding the Common and was responsible for remodeling numerous existing homes and buildings as well. Esty continued to own this building until the early 1900s when maps identify the building as the property of his heirs. Later occupants of the building include the Travis Drug Store in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a popular community landmark with a soda fountain and apothecary.

*MHC Inventory Form #FRA.38. This description substantially corrects and/or modifies the information contained in Form B.*

**939 Worcester Road  
Van Duzer Hardware Store, built ca. 1935.**



This building is a single story brick commercial block typical of commercial buildings constructed along heavily trafficked roads during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to cater to automobile passengers. Rectangular in plan, the building has a flat roof and full-width glass storefront. Architectural ornamentation is minimal with existing cornice details now obscured by a full width metal sign (1977) that projects above the roofline.

939 Worcester Road was constructed in ca. 1935 on property that once held the wood-frame Marshall and Boynton building. According to Framingham Street Directories and historic photographs, this building was originally occupied by the Van Duzer Hardware Company. Historic images of the commercial block show a simply detailed cornice with low parapet and an overhanging blade sign.

**945 Worcester Road/1 Vernon Street  
Tilton-Wheeler Store, built ca. 1830**



The Tilton-Wheeler Store is one of the earliest surviving commercial buildings in Framingham. Located on a corner lot, the large two and one-half story, gable-roofed, wood-frame building presents facades on both Worcester Road and Vernon Street. Based on its roof orientation, the building was most likely designed as a five-bay central entrance building fronting onto Vernon Street. Today, the building's orientation has changed to provide primary access from Worcester Road, although entrances are still located on the Vernon Street facade. The Worcester Road façade (south) is three-bays wide with a center entrance with full-length sidelights. The first story storefront has been modified with large plate glass windows on either side of the entrance. A single window is located in the gable. The three-bay Vernon Street (west) façade retains one first story window opening (south) but the central bay has been altered with two new entrance doors. Despite the recent remodeling of the building's exterior, which removed architectural trim, the building still retains its overall form and upper story fenestration pattern. Greek Revival window frames (originally flush with wall with molded architraves and square corner blocks) may still be present under the new siding on the Vernon Street facade.

The Tilton-Wheeler Store is one of the earliest commercial buildings remaining in Framingham. An early map of Framingham Centre (1830) depicts this building on the Worcester Turnpike between what is now Vernon Street and Library Street (formerly Central Avenue). By 1871, the building was owned by W. Symonds. By 1889, it is under the ownership of J. L. White who continued to own the property through the 1890s. By 1908, the property had again changed ownership, this time under the ownership of M. O'Connell.

*MHC Inventory Form #FRA.39. This description substantially corrects and/or modifies the information contained in Form B.*

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